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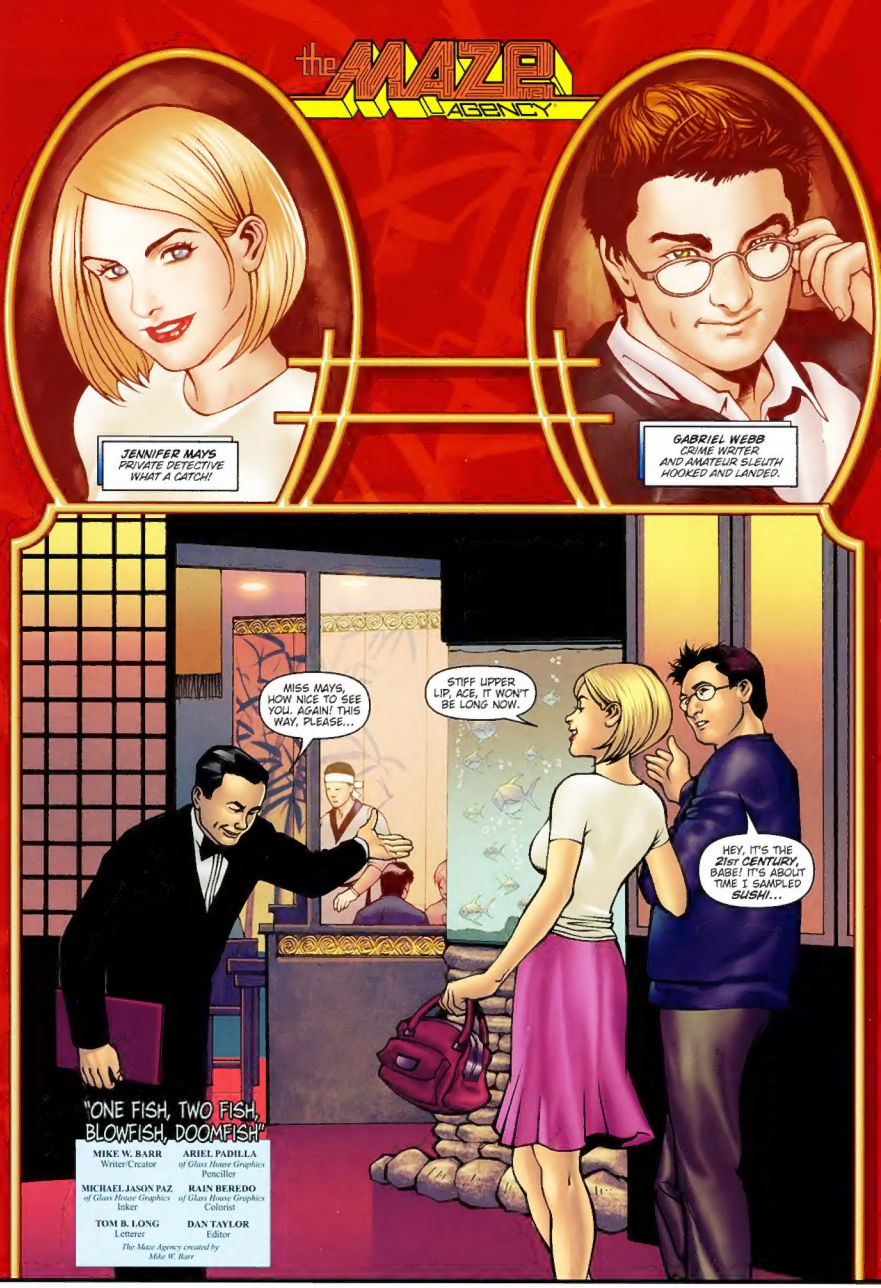

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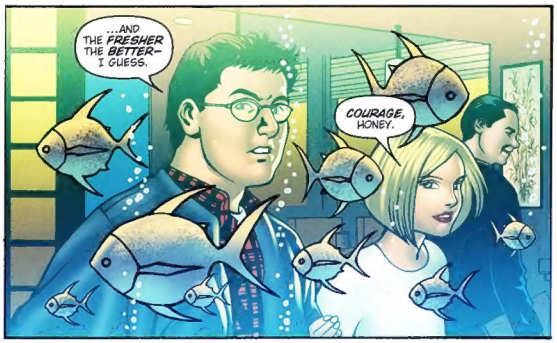
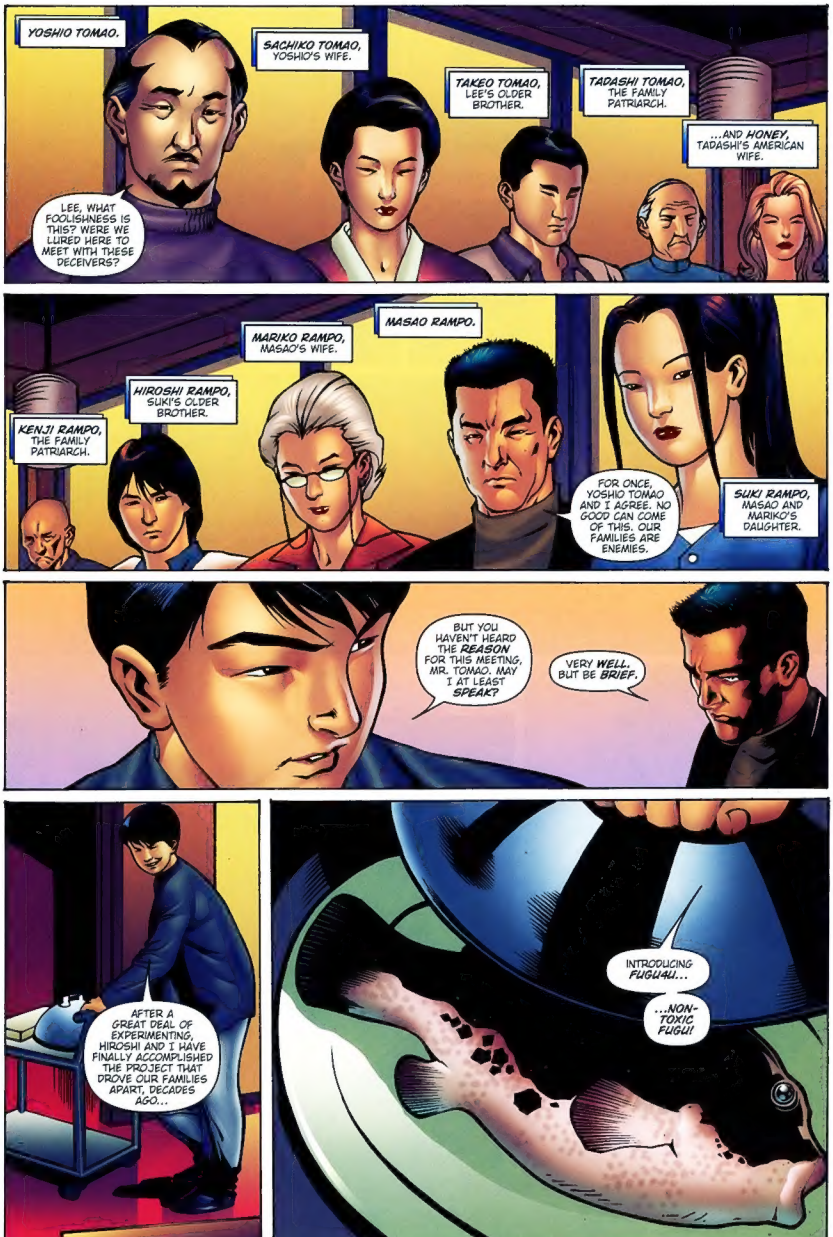
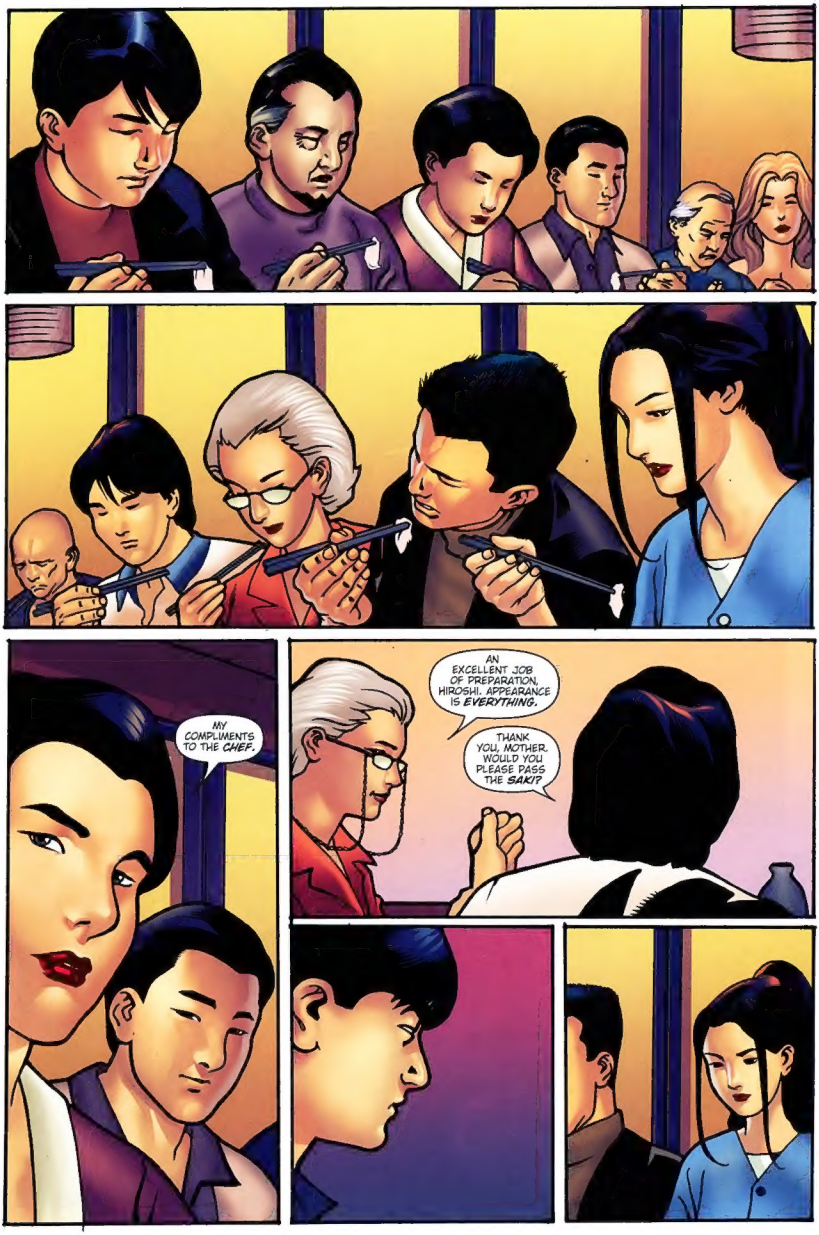

...AND THE FRESHER THE BETTER– I GUESS.
COURAGE, HONEY.

THANK YOU, AKIRA. MY, YOU'RE BUSY TONIGHT.
YES, OUR TOP FLOOR CLOSED. MR. TOMAO HOLDING PRIVATE PARTY.

LEE TOMAO.
...AND I THINK THE REESTABLISHMENT OF THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE RAMPO AND THE TOMAO FAMILIES CALLS FOR A TOAST!

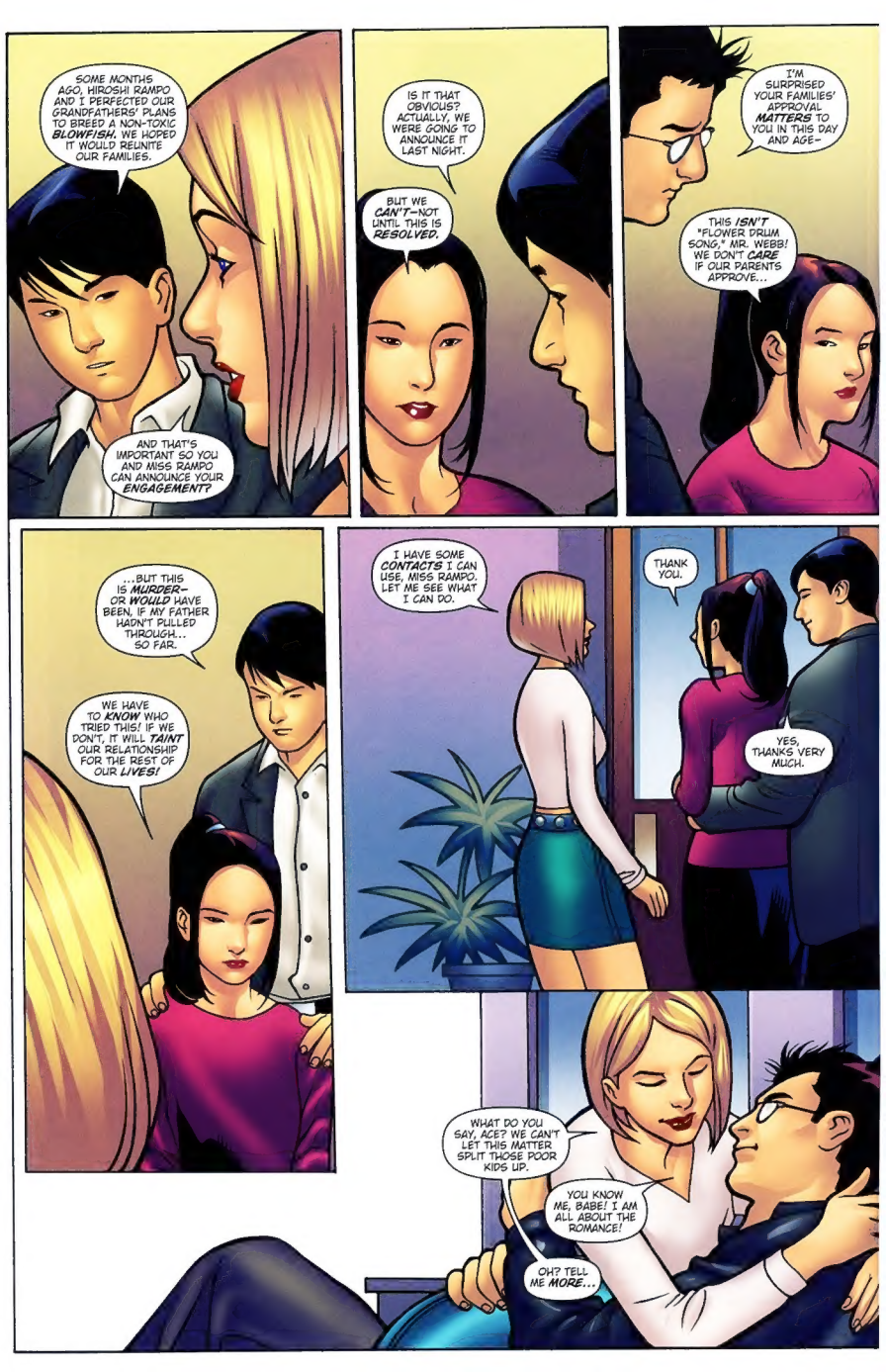

YOSHIO TOMAO.
SACHIKO TOMAO, YOSHIO'S WIFE.
TAKEO TOMAO, LEE'S OLDER BROTHER.
TADASHI TOMAO, THE FAMILY PATRIARCH.
...AND HONEY, TADASHI'S AMERICAN WIFE.
LEE, WHAT FOOLISHNESS IS THIS? WERE WE LURED HERE TO MEET WITH THESE DECEIVERS?
MASAO RAMPO.
MARIKO RAMPO, MASAO'S WIFE.
HIROSHI RAMPO, SUKI'S OLDER BROTHER.
KENJI RAMPO, THE FAMILY PATRIARCH.
FOR ONCE, YOSHIO TOMAO AND I AGREE. NO GOOD CAN COME OF THIS. OUR FAMILIES ARE ENEMIES.
SUKI RAMPO, MASAO AND MARIKO'S DAUGHTER.
BUT YOU HAVEN'T HEARD THE REASON FOR THIS MEETING, MR. TOMAO. MAY I AT LEAST SPEAK?
VERY WELL. BUT BE BRIEF.
AFTER A GREAT DEAL OF EXPERIMENTING, HIROSHI AND I HAVE FINALLY ACCOMPLISHED THE PROJECT THAT DROVE OUR FAMILIES APART, DECADES AGO...
INTRODUCING FUGUU4U...
...NON-TOXIC FUGU!

"NON-TOXIC FUGU"? THAT IS A CONTRADICTION, LIKE "JUMBO SHRIMP." FUGU IS POISONOUS BY NATURE. PART OF ITS THRILL IS RISKING *DEATH* WITH EVERY BITE!
LISTEN TO *REASON*, KENJI...
...IF THE GOAL THAT *SUNDERED* OUR FRIENDSHIP HAS AT LEAST BEEN *ACHIEVED*, WHY DOES THIS NOT ?KAFF KAFF< BRING *HONOR* TO *BOTH* OUR HOUSES?
TADASHI, BE *CAREFUL*, DARLING!
YES, *BOTH* OUR FAMILIES MAY SHARE IN THIS ACHIEVEMENT. HIROSHI, YOU'VE BEEN TRAINED AS A TRADITIONAL *FUGU CHEF*, WILL YOU DO THE HONOR?
THANKS, LEE. THOUGH THE *TRADITIONAL* DUTY OF THE FUGU CHEF IS TO SLICE THE FUGU SO AS TO EXCLUDE THE TOXINS CARRIED IN SOME OF ITS ORGANS...
...*THIS* FUGU HAS BEEN BRED WITHOUT THE POISON—MY ROLE HERE IS SIMPLY *CEREMONIAL*...
...SAVE FOR MY TASK IN SLICING THE FUGU SO THIN IT IS VIRTUALLY *TRANSPARENT!*

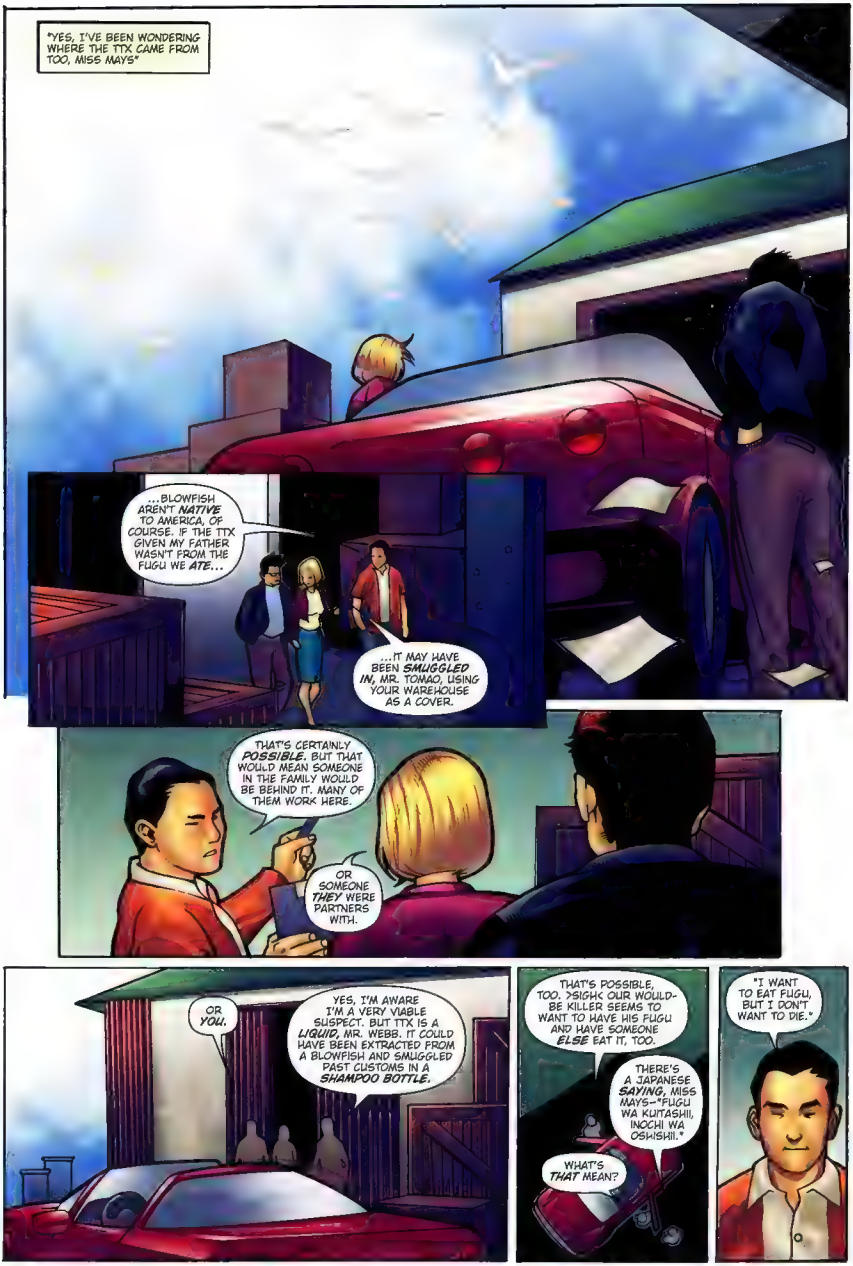

MY COMPLIMENTS TO THE CHEF.
AN EXCELLENT JOB OF PREPARATION, HIROSHI. APPEARANCE IS EVERYTHING.
THANK YOU, MOTHER. WOULD YOU PLEASE PASS THE SAKI?

WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK?
NOT BAD, I GUESS...
...AS LONG AS THERE'S ENOUGH SAKI TO WASH IT DOWN WITH!
HIROSHI AND I USED THE RESEARCH OF OUR GRANDFATHERS TO ACHIEVE OUR GOAL, BEFORE THEIR PARTING. THE PROFITS BELONG TO BOTH FAMILIES, EQUALLY.
THIS CONTRACT MISS RAMPO PREPARED WILL BIND THE FAMILIES IN A PARTNERSHIP AND-FATHER?
I... I FEEL... NUMB...
MR. TOMAO!

MISS MAYS, VERY SORRY ABOUT THE DISTURBANCE–
THESE THINGS HAPPEN, AKIRA. PLEASE, GIVE THIS TO MR. TOMAO'S SON.
Mr. Tomao, call if I can be of any help.
Jennifer Mays
The Maze Agency
Security/Surveillance
Confidential Investigations
212-555-MAZE
HOW DID YOU KNOW THIS WAS A MATTER FOR A DETECTIVE AGENCY, MISS MAYS?
I DIDN'T. BUT I KNEW YOUR FATHER WAS IN EXCELLENT HEALTH... AND I HAD A HUNCH.
I'VE ASKED MR. WEBB TO SIT IN, IF YOU DON'T MIND. HE SOMETIMES... ASSISTS ME.
WHATEVER IT TAKES TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS!


SOME MONTHS AGO, HIROSHI RAMPO AND I PERFECTED OUR GRANDFATHERS' PLANS TO BREED A NON-TOXIC BLOWFISH. WE HOPED IT WOULD REUNITE OUR FAMILIES.
AND THAT'S IMPORTANT SO YOU AND MISS RAMPO CAN ANNOUNCE YOUR ENGAGEMENT?
IS IT THAT OBVIOUS? ACTUALLY, WE WERE GOING TO ANNOUNCE IT LAST NIGHT.
BUT WE CAN'T—NOT UNTIL THIS IS RESOLVED.
I'M SURPRISED YOUR FAMILIES' APPROVAL MATTERS TO YOU IN THIS DAY AND AGE—
THIS ISN'T "FLOWER DRUM SONG," MR. WEBB! WE DON'T CARE IF OUR PARENTS APPROVE...
...BUT THIS IS MURDER—OR WOULD HAVE BEEN, IF MY FATHER HADN'T PULLED THROUGH... SO FAR.
WE HAVE TO KNOW WHO TRIED THIS! IF WE DON'T, IT WILL TAINT OUR RELATIONSHIP FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES!
I HAVE SOME CONTACTS I CAN USE, MISS RAMPO. LET ME SEE WHAT I CAN DO.
THANK YOU.
YES, THANKS VERY MUCH.
WHAT DO YOU SAY, ACE? WE CAN'T LET THIS MATTER SPLIT THOSE POOR KIDS UP.
YOU KNOW ME, BABE! I AM ALL ABOUT THE ROMANCE!
OH? TELL ME MORE...

DID I SAY YOU COULD TOUCH THAT, WEBB? DON'T *TOUCH* THAT!
WE THOUGHT WE COULD BE OF SOME HELP ON THE *TOMAO* CASE, LIEUTENANT BLISS...
THAT'S A *NIGHTMARE!* YOSHIO TOMAO'S SYMPTOMS WERE CONSISTENT WITH THE POISON IN THE BLOWFISH, *TTX*–
TETRODOTOXIN, YOU MEAN? IT'S *1250 TIMES* AS DEADLY AS CYANIDE!
RIGHT! ORDINARILY, THIS WOULDN'T EVEN HAVE BEEN A POLICE MATTER– WE JUST WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THE BLOWFISH *WAS* POISONOUS...
...BUT?
"BUT" THE LAB FOUND TRACES OF A *GELATINOUS SUBSTANCE* IN THE *SAKE!* IT MAY BE THE RESIDUAL OF A *CAPSULE* THAT WAS LOADED WITH TTX AND SNUCK *INTO* THE SAKE!
SO *ANYBODY* AT THE TABLE COULD HAVE DOSED IT!
AND THAT MEANS *TWO* THINGS–
ONE–THE KILLER DIDN'T CARE WHO HE POISONED–
AND *TWO*– HE WON'T STOP AT *ONE!*


"YES, I'VE BEEN WONDERING WHERE THE TTX CAME FROM TOO, MISS MAYS"
...BLOWFISH AREN'T *NATIVE* TO AMERICA, OF COURSE. IF THE TTX GIVEN MY FATHER WASN'T FROM THE FUGU WE *ATE*...
...IT MAY HAVE BEEN *SMUGGLED IN*, MR. TOMAO, USING YOUR WAREHOUSE AS A COVER.
THAT'S CERTAINLY *POSSIBLE*. BUT THAT WOULD MEAN SOMEONE IN THE FAMILY WOULD BE BEHIND IT. MANY OF THEM WORK HERE.
OR SOMEONE *THEY* WERE PARTNERS WITH.
OR *YOU*.
YES, I'M AWARE I'M A VERY VIABLE SUSPECT. BUT TTX IS A *LIQUID*, MR. WEBB. IT COULD HAVE BEEN EXTRACTED FROM A BLOWFISH AND SMUGGLED PAST CUSTOMS IN A *SHAMPOO BOTTLE*.
THAT'S POSSIBLE, TOO. >SIGH< OUR WOULD-BE KILLER SEEMS TO WANT TO HAVE HIS FUGU AND HAVE SOMEONE *ELSE* EAT IT, TOO.
THERE'S A JAPANESE *SAYING*, MISS MAYS--"FUGU WA KUITASHII, INOCHI WA OSHISHII."
WHAT'S *THAT* MEAN?
"I WANT TO EAT FUGU, BUT I DON'T WANT TO DIE."

I'M GLAD YOU'RE FEELING BETTER, MR. TOMAO.
LEE WOULD SAY I AM TOO ORNERY TO DIE, MISS MAYS. FUGU POISONING IS NO WORSE THAN HOSPITAL FOOD.
IS THERE ANYTHING YOU CAN TELL ME ABOUT THIS? ANYONE YOU SUSPECT?
WHY ARE YOU SO CERTAIN IT WAS DELIBERATE? PERHAPS THE FUGU, DESPITE ITS CLAIMS, WAS TOXIC
PERHAPS, MR. TOMAO–BUT THE PAST CAN BE AS POISONOUS AS ANY FUGU.
MR. RAMPO, THANK YOU FOR YOUR VISIT
I PHONED YOUR OFFICE, MR. RAMPO, I'M–
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE, MISS MAYS. RAMPO FOODS DID NOT BECOME A LEADER IN ITS FIELD FROM LACK OF PREPARATION.
I TAKE IT YOU THINK THE ATTEMPT ON MR. TOMAO WAS DELIBERATE?
ONE ASSUMES NOTHING IN BUSINESS, MISS MAYS–NEITHER INNOCENCE NOR GUILT.
GABE, WE'D BETTER GO...
BEEP BEEP
I SAID, WE'D BETTER GO!
ALL RIGHT, ALREADY! I CAN HEAR YOU!

WHAT'S THE RUSH?
THAT CALL WAS FROM LT. BLISS. THERE'S BEEN A DEVELOPMENT IN THE CASE... TO SAY THE LEAST.
911 GOT A CALL FROM INSIDE THIS APARTMENT, MISS MAYS--
FROM HERE? THE RAMPO APARTMENT?
THE PARAMEDICS FOUND MRS. RAMPO DEAD.
OF WHAT?
A SUPERFICIAL EXAMINATION POINTS TO TTX, INJECTED INTO HER CHEEK. BUT I'LL RUN A FULL SCREEN TO BE CERTAIN.
DAMN RIGHT, YOU WILL.
HER PRINTS ARE ON THE SYRINGE AND THE BOTTLE. THIS MAY BE AS GOOD AS A CONFESSION.
YOU THINK SHE KILLED HERSELF? THESE PHOTOS SHOW MRS. RAMPO TO BE A VERY VAIN WOMAN, LIEUTENANT... WOULD SHE INJECT HER OWN FACE WITH POISON?
HERE'S WHAT YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR...
CAN YOU READ, SIMONS? GET ON IT!
RIGHT, LOOT!

BINGO!

MRS. RAMPO WAS GIVING HERSELF *SILICONE INJECTIONS* TO APPEAR *YOUNGER.* SOMEONE *KNEW* THIS...
...AND SUBSTITUTED *TTX* FOR THE SILICONE! THAT RULES OUT MR. TOMAO'S POISONING AS *ACCIDENTAL.*

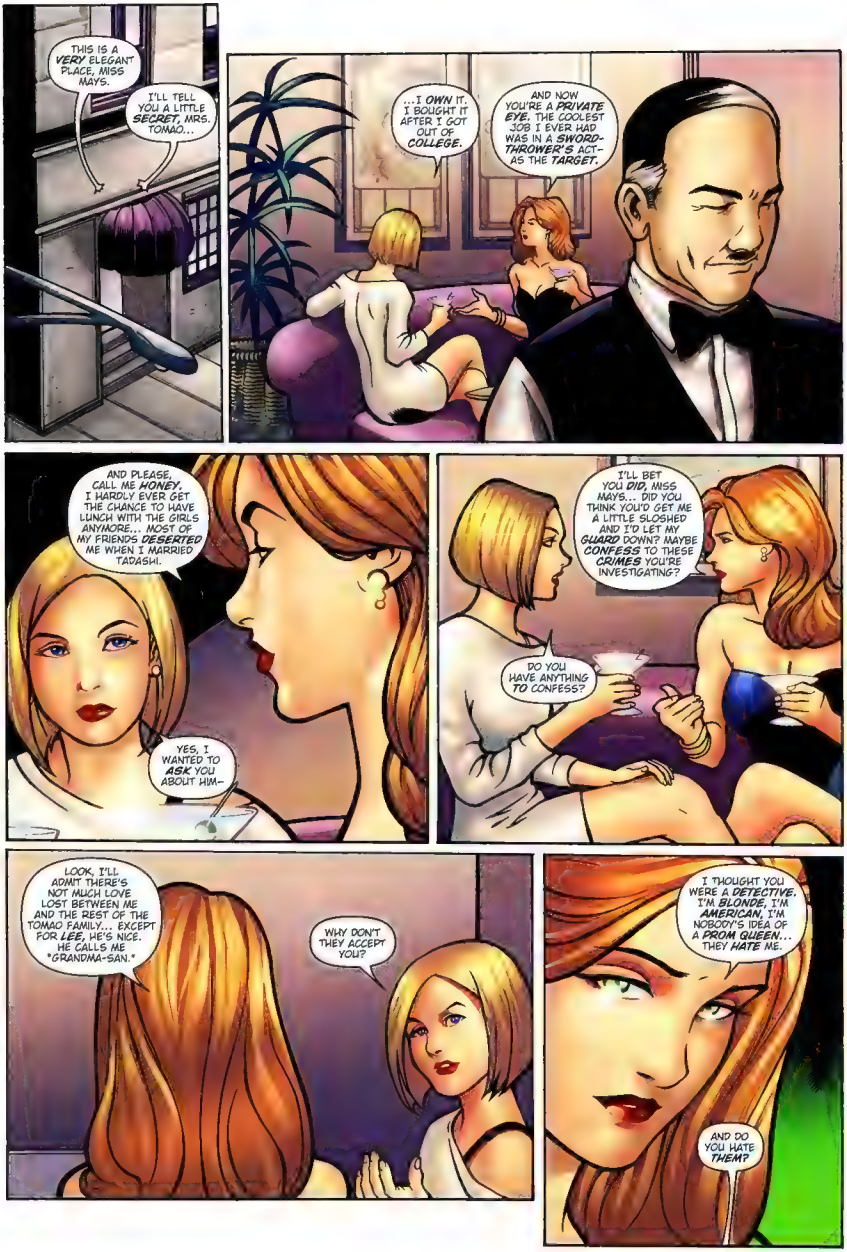
YES, WE'RE LOOKING FOR A *MURDERER.* MAYBE IT WAS MRS. TOMAO WHO CALLED 911, OR PERHAPS--
HEY, *STOP!*
OW!

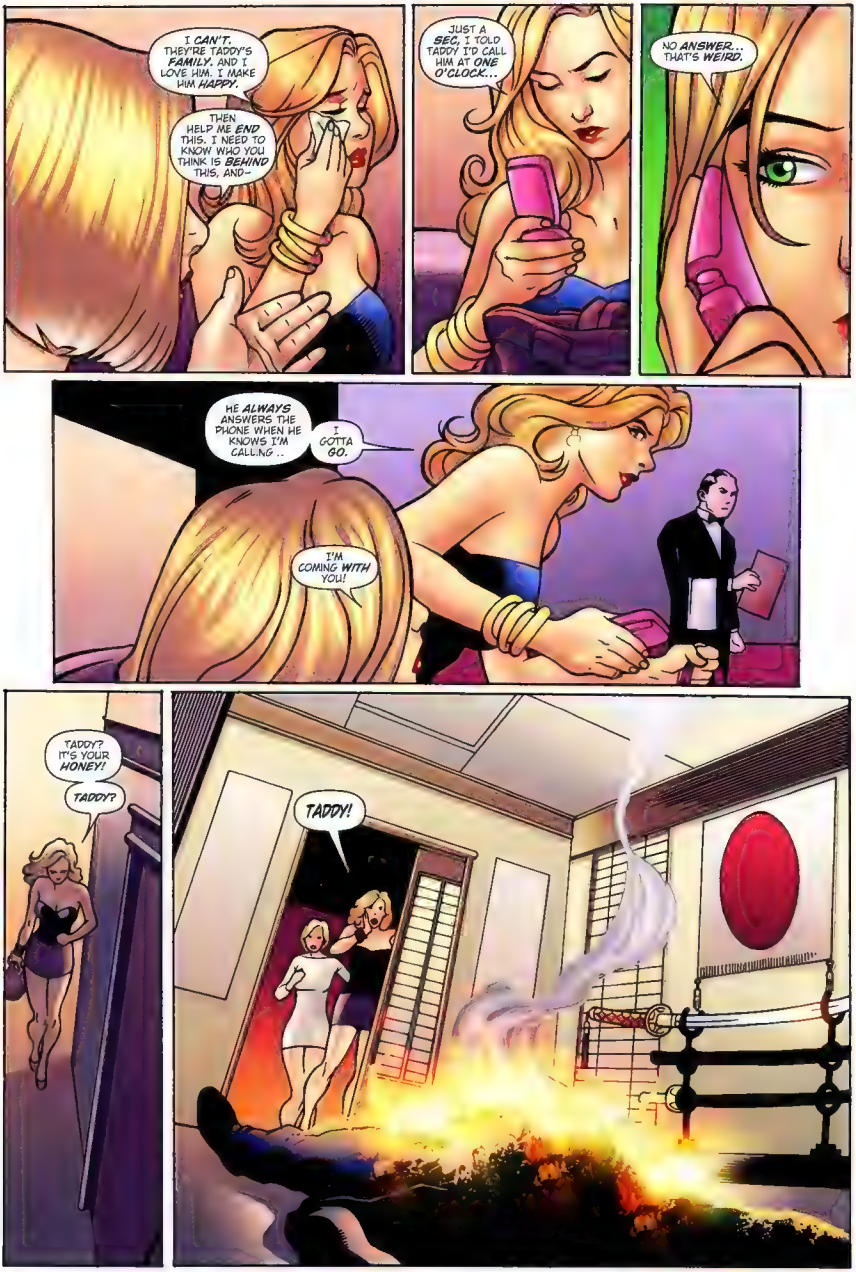
WHAT'S *UP,* PROFESSOR?
THERE! SHE RAN *THAT WAY!*

NOT SO *FAST,* LADY!
NO! RELEASE ME--!

MRS. TOMAO?

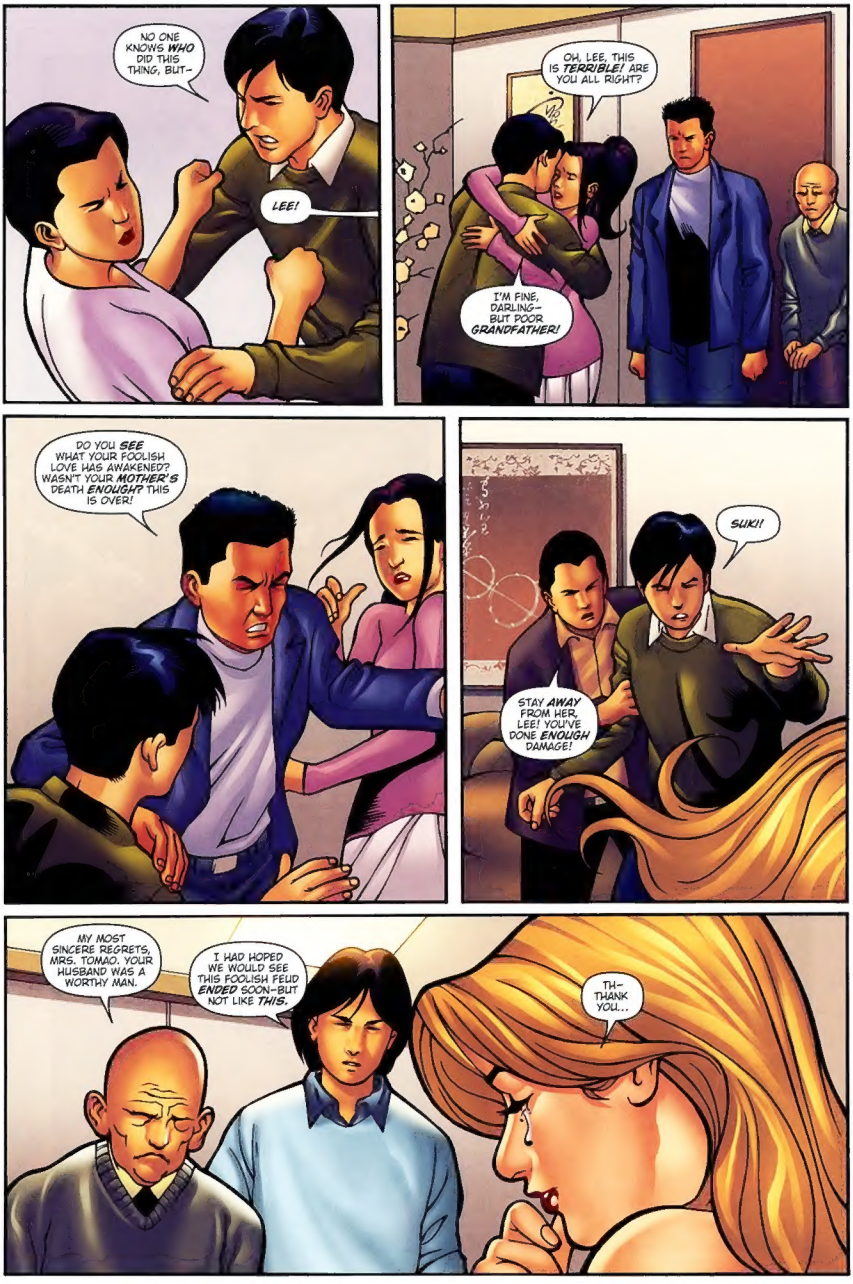
MURDER MRS. RAMPO? THAT'S ABSURD. I FOUND HER DEAD AND CALLED THE POLICE.
YOUR FINGERPRINTS ARE ON ONE OF THE WALL PHONES, MRS. TOMAO...
...BUT THAT DOESN'T PROVE YOU DIDN'T KILL MRS. RAMPO.
WHY WOULD I REMAIN AT HER APARTMENT IF I KILLED HER? TTX TAKES A LONG TIME TO WORK!
MOM!
THEN WHY DID YOU GO THERE? HOW DID YOU GET IN?
MOM, DON'T SAY ANYTHING!
IT'S ALL RIGHT, LEE...
...I WENT THERE TO TRY TO END THE RIFT BETWEEN US! AND HOW I GOT IN, WELL...
I'M WAITING, MRS. TOMAO...
I TOOK YOUR KEYS, LEE!
MOM, WHAT DO YOU-
WE ALL KNOW YOU AND SUKI RAMPO ARE IN LOVE! SHE GAVE YOU KEYS TO HER PLACE!
OH
AND IF SHE HAD KEYS TO THE RAMPO APARTMENT, ANYONE COULD!
DON'T REMIND ME. WE NEED ANOTHER VIEWPOINT- SOMEONE FROM OUTSIDE THOSE FAMILIES... AND I THINK I KNOW WHO TO CALL.

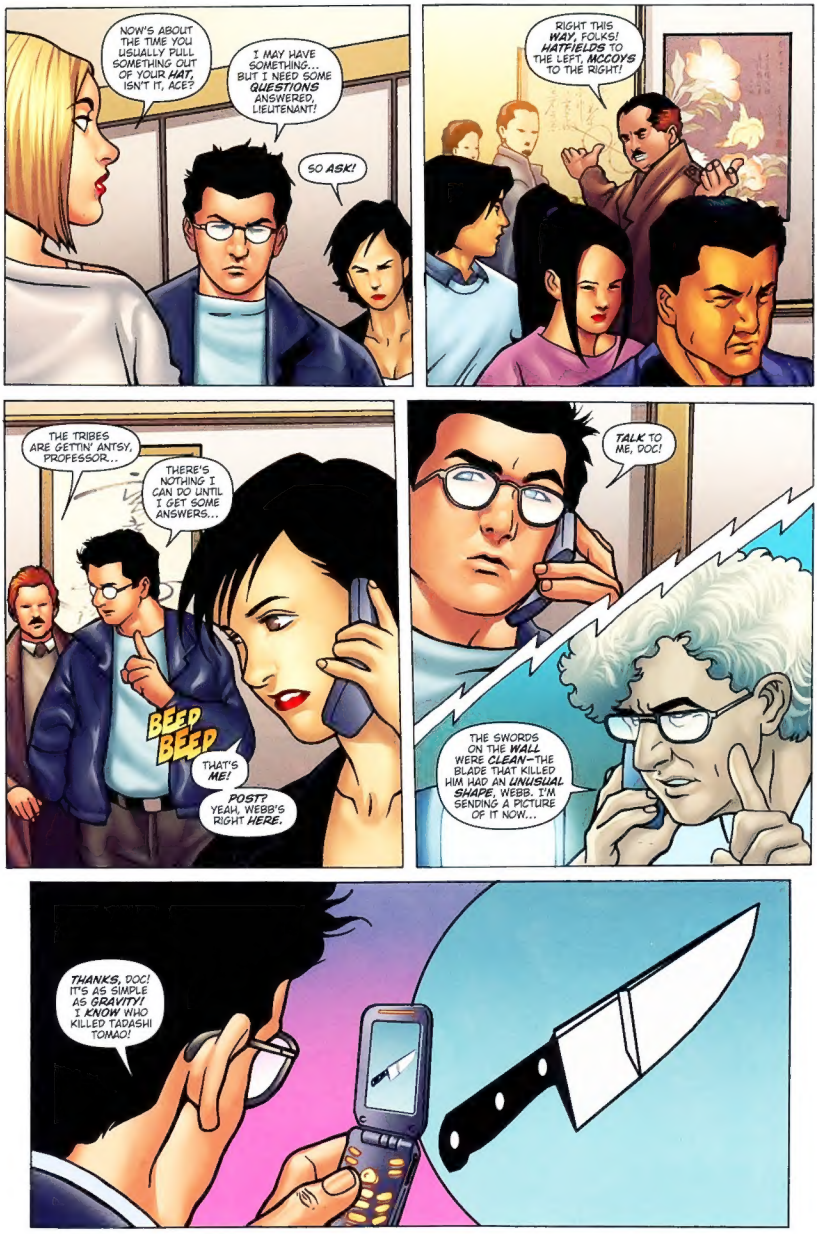

THIS IS A VERY ELEGANT PLACE, MISS MAYS.
I'LL TELL YOU A LITTLE SECRET, MRS. TOMAO...
...I OWN IT. I BOUGHT IT AFTER I GOT OUT OF COLLEGE.
AND NOW YOU'RE A PRIVATE EYE. THE COOLEST JOB I EVER HAD WAS IN A SWORD-THROWER'S ACT- AS THE TARGET.
AND PLEASE, CALL ME HONEY. I HARDLY EVER GET THE CHANCE TO HAVE LUNCH WITH THE GIRLS ANYMORE... MOST OF MY FRIENDS DESERTED ME WHEN I MARRIED TADASHI.
YES, I WANTED TO ASK YOU ABOUT HIM-
I'LL BET YOU DID, MISS MAYS... DID YOU THINK YOU'D GET ME A LITTLE SLOSHED AND I'D LET MY GUARD DOWN? MAYBE CONFESS TO THESE CRIMES YOU'RE INVESTIGATING?
DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO CONFESS?
LOOK, I'LL ADMIT THERE'S NOT MUCH LOVE LOST BETWEEN ME AND THE REST OF THE TOMAO FAMILY... EXCEPT FOR LEE, HE'S NICE. HE CALLS ME "GRANDMA-SAN."
WHY DON'T THEY ACCEPT YOU?
I THOUGHT YOU WERE A DETECTIVE. I'M BLONDE, I'M AMERICAN, I'M NOBODY'S IDEA OF A PROM QUEEN... THEY HATE ME.
AND DO YOU HATE THEM?

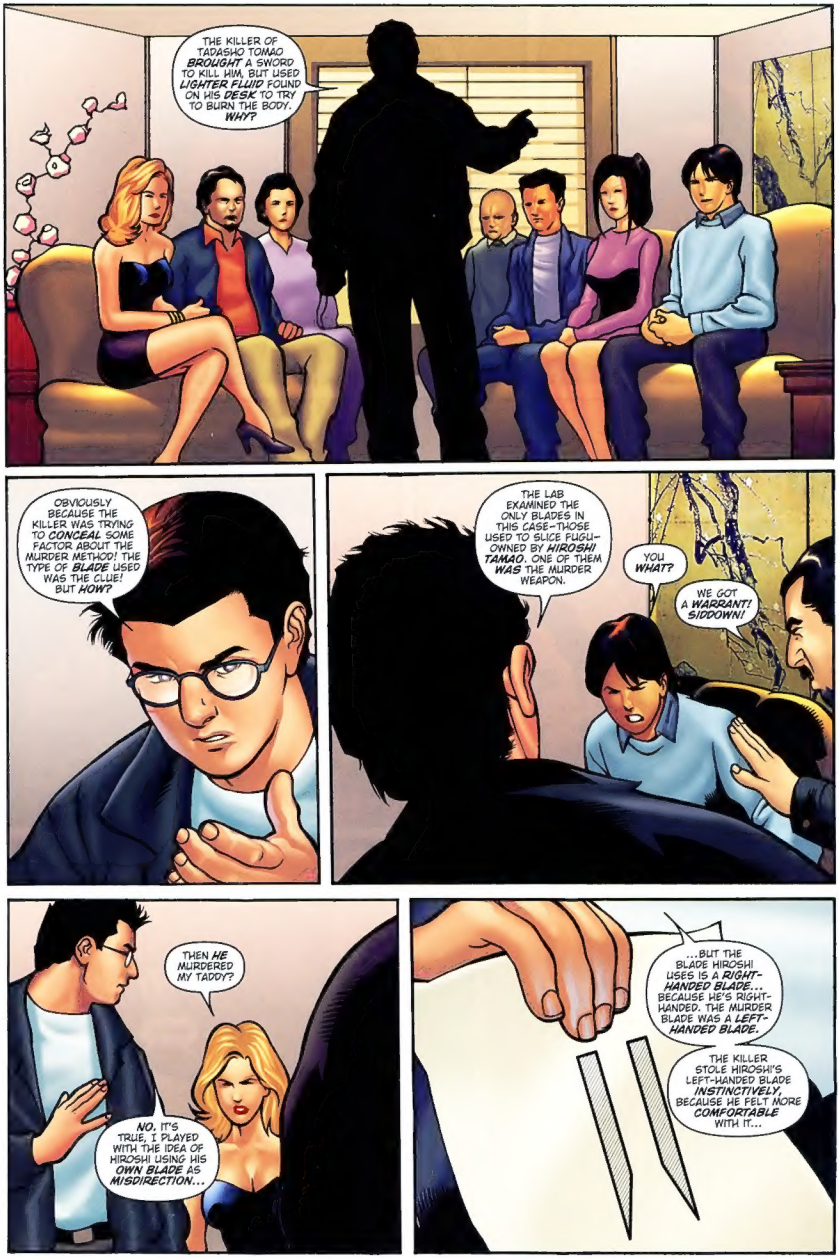

I CAN'T. THEY'RE TADDY'S FAMILY. AND I LOVE HIM. I MAKE HIM HAPPY.
THEN HELP ME END THIS. I NEED TO KNOW WHO YOU THINK IS BEHIND THIS, AND–
JUST A SEC. I TOLD TADDY I'D CALL HIM AT ONE O'CLOCK...
NO ANSWER... THAT'S WEIRD.
HE ALWAYS ANSWERS THE PHONE WHEN HE KNOWS I'M CALLING..
I GOTTA GO.
I'M COMING WITH YOU!
TADDY? IT'S YOUR HONEY!
TADDY?
TADDY!

MAYBE HE'S NOT... NOT...
PLEASE, HONEY, STAY BACK!
THE BODY WAS SET AFIRE AFTER DEATH, LIEUTENANT!
AFTER DEATH? WHY, DR. POST?
OW!
DOC, CHECK THOSE SWORDS ON THE WALL, WILL YOU?
YOU DON'T GIVE THE ORDERS HERE, WEBB! HE WORKS FOR ME, NOT FOR YOU!
POST, BE SURE TO CHECK THOSE SWORDS ON THE WALL.
SURE WILL, LIEUTENANT.

?
LIEUTENANT BLISS...?
WHAT HAVE YOU FOUND HERE, WEBB?
IT'S A CAN OF LIGHTER FLUID.
AN EMPTY CAN. BETTER HAVE POST CHECK THIS, TOO.
GOOD IDEA.
AND HOW ABOUT THAT LIGHTER? WHERE'S THERE'S SMOKE...
COULDN'T HURT.
HER! SHE KILLED MY GRANDFATHER!
GOLDDIGGING MURDERER!
MOTHER, STOP!


NO ONE KNOWS WHO DID THIS THING, BUT–
LEE!
OH, LEE, THIS IS TERRIBLE! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I'M FINE, DARLING– BUT POOR GRANDFATHER!
DO YOU SEE WHAT YOUR FOOLISH LOVE HAS AWAKENED? WASN'T YOUR MOTHER'S DEATH ENOUGH? THIS IS OVER!
SUKI!
STAY AWAY FROM HER, LEE! YOU'VE DONE ENOUGH DAMAGE!
MY MOST SINCERE REGRETS, MRS. TOMAO. YOUR HUSBAND WAS A WORTHY MAN.
I HAD HOPED WE WOULD SEE THIS FOOLISH FEUD ENDED SOON–BUT NOT LIKE THIS.
TH– THANK YOU...


NOW'S ABOUT THE TIME YOU USUALLY PULL SOMETHING OUT OF YOUR HAT, ISN'T IT, ACE?
I MAY HAVE SOMETHING... BUT I NEED SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED, LIEUTENANT!
SO ASK!
RIGHT THIS WAY, FOLKS! HATFIELDS TO THE LEFT, MCCOYS TO THE RIGHT!
THE TRIBES ARE GETTIN' ANTSY, PROFESSOR...
THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO UNTIL I GET SOME ANSWERS...
BEEP BEEP
THAT'S ME!
POST? YEAH, WEBB'S RIGHT HERE.
TALK TO ME, DOC!
THE SWORDS ON THE WALL WERE CLEAN—THE BLADE THAT KILLED HIM HAD AN UNUSUAL SHAPE, WEBB. I'M SENDING A PICTURE OF IT NOW...
THANKS, DOC! IT'S AS SIMPLE AS GRAVITY! I KNOW WHO KILLED TADASHI TOMAO!


THE KILLER OF TADASHO TOMAO *BROUGHT* A SWORD TO KILL HIM, BUT USED *LIGHTER FLUID* FOUND ON HIS *DESK* TO TRY TO BURN THE BODY. *WHY?*
OBVIOUSLY BECAUSE THE KILLER WAS TRYING TO *CONCEAL* SOME FACTOR ABOUT THE MURDER METHOD! THE TYPE OF *BLADE* USED WAS THE CLUE! BUT *HOW?*
THE LAB EXAMINED THE ONLY BLADES IN THIS CASE--THOSE USED TO SLICE FUGU--OWNED BY *HIROSHI TAMAO*. ONE OF THEM *WAS* THE MURDER WEAPON.
YOU *WHAT?*
WE GOT A *WARRANT!* SIDDOWN!
THEN *HE* MURDERED MY TADDY?
NO. IT'S TRUE, I PLAYED WITH THE IDEA OF HIROSHI USING HIS *OWN BLADE* AS *MISDIRECTION*...
...BUT THE BLADE HIROSHI USES IS A *RIGHT-HANDED BLADE*... BECAUSE HE'S RIGHT-HANDED. THE MURDER BLADE WAS A *LEFT-HANDED BLADE.*
THE KILLER STOLE HIROSHI'S LEFT-HANDED BLADE *INSTINCTIVELY,* BECAUSE HE FELT MORE *COMFORTABLE* WITH IT...

...BECAUSE HE'S LEFT-HANDED! AND THE ONLY ONE OF YOU WHO'S LEFT-HANDED IS TAKEO TOMAO!"
*PAGE 5, PANEL 1.
YOU TRIED TO FRAME HIROSHI FOR THE MURDER, BUT THEN REALIZED YOU USED THE WRONG BLADE, AND TRIED TO BURN THE BODY.
BUT... WHY?
BUT... YOU POISONED YOUR FATHER!
THE FIRST DOSE OF TTX WAS SMALL ENOUGH FOR THE VICTIM TO BE PULLED THROUGH, SHOULD ONE OF US HAVE DRUNK IT!
AND DID YOU TWO HAVE THE STEAK OR THE FISH?
STEAK.
END